NEWS FROM
THE LIBERTARIAN PARTY
1528 Pennsylvania Avenue SE ◆ Washington DC 20003

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 14, 1995

For additional information
Bill Winter, Director of Communications
(202) 543-1988

Libertarian Party gives Republicans a B- grade for Contract With America

WASHINGTON, DC -- Now that the first 100 days of the 104th Congress are officially over, the Libertarian Party has issued a "freedom" report card on the Republican Party's Contract With America.

And they give Republicans a B- for their efforts.

"We wanted to wait until the finger-pointing, back-slapping, name-calling, and congratulations had died down so we could make a calm, dispassionate assessment of the Contract With America," said Steve Dasbach, Chair of America's third-largest political party.

"Our grading criteria were simple: Did the elements of the Contract *reduce* the size, cost, and intrusiveness of government? Did it *increase* the personal and economic freedom of American citizens? These are the fundamental issues that Libertarians are concerned about."

Dasbach said the B- grade reflected Libertarian approval of many elements in the Contract, but he noted, "Republicans missed many opportunities to do more. And we saw some backsliding on several important issues. Overall, the Republicans had a chance to make history, to launch a real revolution, and to live up to their libertarian campaign rhetoric. Unfortunately, they fell somewhat short of that goal."

The Libertarian Party's grades for the Contract ranged from an A for the Line-Item Veto, which won the Libertarians' "whole-hearted endorsement," to a D for the Taking Back Our Streets Act, which Dasbach called "dangerous."

# # #

Grades for the major components of the Contract

1. The Congressional Accountability Act, which requires Congress to live by the same laws it imposes on the American public. **Grade: C+**

"This was a procedural issue, and largely symbolic," said Dasbach. "We would have preferred that Congress *reverse* this bill — and let American citizens opt out of those oppressive laws, like Congress used to. That would have been real reform!"

2. The Fiscal Responsibility Act, a Constitutional amendment requiring a balanced federal budget. **Grade: B**

"Balancing the budget is the *minimum* we Libertarians would expect of any fiscally responsible government, so this amendment was a step in the right direction," said Dasbach. "But it does nothing to *reduce* the current, bloated federal budget."

3. The Line-Item Veto, which allows the president to veto specific items in the federal budget. **Grade: A**

"This gets our whole-hearted endorsement; it gives politicians power to do nothing but *cut* government spending. Of course, we really need to take a meat-axe to the federal budget, and the line-item veto is just a surgeon's scalpel. But it's a start," said Dasbach.

4. The Taking Back Our Streets Act, which modifies the Omnibus Crime Bill of 1994. **Grade: D**

"At best, a one-step-forward, two-steps-back bill," said Dasbach. "This dangerous bill weakens the Fourth Amendment, gutting one of the basic civil liberties of Americans — the right to be secure against unreasonable searches and seizures. And it does nothing to roll back the unconstitutional semi-automatic weapons ban, which violates the Second Amendment. But it did reduce the price tag of the crime bill from about $30 billion to $24 billion, and did introduce some elements of victim restitution."

5. The National Security Revitalization Act, which restricts the president's ability to participate in U.N. "peacekeeping" activities. **Grade: B+**

"This places admirable restraints on the president's military powers, and makes it extremely difficult for the president to send American troops to die in another Somalia or Haiti," said Dasbach. "On the negative side, it didn't *reduce* the military budget by a single penny, and didn't extract the United States from our expensive, needless NATO burdens."

6. The Regulatory Flexibility Act, which places a moratorium on new federal regulations. **Grade: B+**

"This will force federal bureaucrats to stop churning out useless, costly regulations for a year. That's good," said Dasbach. "On the other hand, current regulations cost Americans between $430 billion and $1 trillion a year, and this oppressive level of regulatory overkill is simply maintained. But the bill is a good step in the right direction."

7. The Personal Responsibility Act and the **Family Reinforcement Act,** which replaces many federal welfare programs with block grants to states. **Grade: D**

"Another missed opportunity for real reform," said Dasbach. "It's more talk than action, and simply shifts wasteful welfare programs from the federal level to the state level. It's not the step towards private, voluntary charity that Libertarians would like to see."

8. The Common Sense Legal Reform Act, which puts caps on legal damage awards and institutes a "loser-pays" provision. It would also require compensation for property owners if federal regulations reduce the value of their property by 20% or more. **Grade: B+**

"The legal clauses may bring some common sense to our court system," said Dasbach. "But the most important element of this section will restrict the ability of bureaucrats to 'take' property through burdensome regulations. That's extremely welcome. But Libertarians would have liked to see this kick in at 1% — not 20%. Why should bureaucrats be able to steal 20% of your property's value?"

9. The Job Creation & Wage Enhancement Act; the **American Dream Restoration Act;** and the **Senior Citizens Fairness Act,** which grants a $500 per child tax credit; cuts the capital gains tax; and allows Social Security recipients to earn more income before benefits are cut. **Grade: C**

"This bill includes $189 billion in tax cuts, and Libertarians approve whenever Americans are allowed to keep a little more of their own money," said Dasbach. "But this legislation avoids any meaningful reforms to America's fiscal time-bomb, Social Security. Again, we're seeing the Republicans duck the tough issues."

10. The Citizen Legislature Act, which imposes term limits on the U.S. House and Senate. **Grade: No grade.**

"The Libertarian Party doesn't take a position on term limits," said Dasbach. "Yes, it would be nice to see some of the entrenched, big-spending politicians rotated out of office. But most Libertarians don't see any real benefit in simply cycling bad Republicans and Democrats in and out of office more quickly."